

CHAPTER X

FEELING AND ENTHUSIASM

Enthusiasm is that secret and harmonious spirit that hovers over the production of genius.

—ISAAC DISRAELI, *Literary Character*.

If you are addressing a body of scientists on such a subject as the veins in a butterfly's wings, or on road structure, naturally your theme will not arouse much feeling in either you or your audience. These are purely mental subjects. But if you want men to vote for a measure that will abolish child labor, or if you would inspire them to take up arms for freedom, you must strike straight at their feelings. We lie on soft beds, sit near the radiator on a cold day, eat cherry pie, and devote our attention to one of the opposite sex, not because we have reasoned out that it is the right thing to do, but because it feels right. No one but a dyspeptic chooses his diet from a chart. Our feelings dictate what we shall eat and generally how we shall act. Man is a feeling animal, hence the public speaker's ability to arouse men to action depends almost wholly on his ability to touch their emotions.

Negro mothers on the auction-block seeing their children sold away from them into slavery have flamed out some of America's most stirring speeches. True, the mother did not have any knowledge of the technique of speaking, but she had something greater than all technique, more effective than reason: feeling. The great speeches of the world have not been delivered on tariff reductions or post-office appropriations. The speeches that will live have been charged with emotional force. Prosperity and peace are poor developers of eloquence. When great wrongs are to be righted, when the public heart is flaming with passion, that is the occasion for memorable speaking. Patrick Henry made an immortal address, for in an epochal crisis he pleaded for liberty. He had roused himself to the point

where he could honestly and passionately exclaim, “Give me liberty or give me death.” His fame would have been different had he lived to-day and argued for the recall of judges.

The Power of Enthusiasm

Political parties hire bands, and pay for applause—they argue that, for vote-getting, to stir up enthusiasm is more effective than reasoning. How far they are right depends on the hearers, but there can be no doubt about the contagious nature of enthusiasm. A watch manufacturer in New York tried out two series of watch advertisements; one argued the superior construction, workmanship, durability, and guarantee offered with the watch; the other was headed, “A Watch to be Proud of,” and dwelt upon the pleasure and pride of ownership. The latter series sold twice as many as the former. A salesman for a locomotive works informed the writer that in selling railroad engines emotional appeal was stronger than an argument based on mechanical excellence.

Illustrations without number might be cited to show that in all our actions we are emotional beings. The speaker who would speak efficiently must develop the power to arouse feeling.

Webster, great debater that he was, knew that the real secret of a speaker’s power was an emotional one. He eloquently says of eloquence:

“Affected passion, intense expression, the pomp of declamation, all may aspire after it; they cannot reach it. It comes, if it come at all, like the outbreak of a fountain from the earth, or the bursting forth of volcanic fires, with spontaneous, original, native force.

“The graces taught in the schools, the costly ornaments and studied contrivances of speech, shock and disgust men, when their own lives, and the fate of their wives, their children, and their country hang on the decision of the hour. Then words have lost their power, rhetoric is in vain, and all elaborate oratory contemptible. Even genius itself then feels rebuked and subdued, as in the presence of higher qualities. Then patriotism is eloquent, then self-devotion is eloquent. The clear conception outrunning the deductions of logic, the high purpose, the firm resolve, the dauntless spirit, speaking on the tongue, beaming from the eye, informing every feature, and urging the whole man

onward, right onward to his subject—this, this is eloquence; or rather, it is something greater and higher than all eloquence; it is action, noble, sublime, godlike action.”

When traveling through the Northwest some time ago, one of the present writers strolled up a village street after dinner and noticed a crowd listening to a “faker” speaking on a corner from a goods-box. Remembering Emerson’s advice about learning something from every man we meet, the observer stopped to listen to this speaker’s appeal. He was selling a hair tonic, which he claimed to have discovered in Arizona. He removed his hat to show what this remedy had done for him, washed his face in it to demonstrate that it was as harmless as water, and enlarged on its merits in such an enthusiastic manner that the half-dollars poured in on him in a silver flood. When he had supplied the audience with hair tonic, he asked why a greater proportion of men than women were bald. No one knew. He explained that it was because women wore thinner-soled shoes, and so made a good electrical connection with mother earth, while men wore thick, dry-soled shoes that did not transmit the earth’s electricity to the body. Men’s hair, not having a proper amount of electrical food, died and fell out. Of course he had a remedy—a little copper plate that should be nailed on the bottom of the shoe. He pictured in enthusiastic and vivid terms the desirability of escaping baldness—and paid tributes to his copper plates. Strange as it may seem when the story is told in cold print, the speaker’s enthusiasm had swept his audience with him, and they crushed around his stand with outstretched “quarters” in their anxiety to be the possessors of these magical plates!

Emerson’s suggestion had been well taken—the observer had seen again the wonderful, persuasive power of enthusiasm!

Enthusiasm sent millions crusading into the Holy Land to redeem it from the Saracens. Enthusiasm plunged Europe into a thirty years’ war over religion. Enthusiasm sent three small ships plying the unknown sea to the shores of a new world. When Napoleon’s army were worn out and

discouraged in their ascent of the Alps, the Little Corporal stopped them and ordered the bands to play the Marseillaise. Under its soul-stirring strains there were no Alps.

Listen! Emerson said: “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” Carlyle declared that “Every great movement in the annals of history has been the triumph of enthusiasm.” It is as contagious as measles. Eloquence is half inspiration. Sweep your audience with you in a pulsation of enthusiasm. Let yourself go. “A man,” said Oliver Cromwell, “never rises so high as when he knows not whither he is going.”

How are We to Acquire and Develop Enthusiasm?

It is not to be slipped on like a smoking jacket. A book cannot furnish you with it. It is a growth—an effect. But an effect of what? Let us see.

Emerson wrote: “A painter told me that nobody could draw a tree without in some sort becoming a tree; or draw a child by studying the outlines of his form merely,—but, by watching for a time his motion and plays, the painter enters his nature, and then can draw him at will in every attitude. So Roos ‘entered into the inmost nature of his sheep.’ I knew a draughtsman employed in a public survey, who found that he could not sketch the rocks until their geological structure was first explained to him.”

When Sarah Bernhardt plays a difficult rôle she frequently will speak to no one from four o’clock in the afternoon until after the performance. From the hour of four she lives her character. Booth, it is reported, would not permit anyone to speak to him between the acts of his Shakesperean rôles, for he was Macbeth then—not Booth. Dante, exiled from his beloved Florence, condemned to death, lived in caves, half starved; then Dante wrote out his heart in “The Divine Comedy.” Bunyan entered into the spirit of his “Pilgrim’s Progress” so thoroughly that he fell down on the floor of Bedford jail and wept for joy. Turner, who lived in a garret, arose before daybreak and walked over the hills nine miles to see the sun rise on the

ocean, that he might catch the spirit of its wonderful beauty. Wendell Phillips' sentences were full of "silent lightning" because he bore in his heart the sorrow of five million slaves.

There is only one way to get feeling into your speaking—and whatever else you forget, forget not this: *You must actually ENTER INTO* the character you impersonate, the cause you advocate, the case you argue—enter into it so deeply that it clothes you, enthalls you, possesses you wholly. Then you are, in the true meaning of the word, in *sympathy* with your subject, for its feeling is your feeling, you "feel with" it, and therefore your enthusiasm is both genuine and contagious. The Carpenter who spoke as "never man spake" uttered words born out of a passion of love for humanity—he had entered into humanity, and thus became Man.

But we must not look upon the foregoing words as a facile prescription for decocting a feeling which may then be ladled out to a complacent audience in quantities to suit the need of the moment. Genuine feeling in a speech is bone and blood of the speech itself and not something that may be added to it or subtracted at will. In the ideal address theme, speaker and audience become one, fused by the emotion and thought of the hour.

The Need of Sympathy for Humanity

It is impossible to lay too much stress on the necessity for the speaker's having a broad and deep tenderness for human nature. One of Victor Hugo's biographers attributes his power as an orator and writer to his wide sympathies and profound religious feelings. Recently we heard the editor of *Collier's Weekly* speak on short-story writing, and he so often emphasized the necessity for this broad love for humanity, this truly religious feeling, that he apologized twice for delivering a sermon. Few if any of the immortal speeches were ever delivered for a selfish or a narrow cause—they were born out of a passionate desire to help humanity; instances, Paul's address to the Athenians on Mars Hill, Lincoln's Gettysburg speech, The

Sermon on the Mount, Henry's address before the Virginia Convention of Delegates.

The seal and sign of greatness is a desire to serve others. Self-preservation is the first law of life, but self-abnegation is the first law of greatness—and of art. Selfishness is the fundamental cause of all sin, it is the thing that all great religions, all worthy philosophies, have struck at. Out of a heart of real sympathy and love come the speeches that move humanity.

Former United States Senator Albert J. Beveridge in an introduction to one of the volumes of "Modern Eloquence," says: "The profoundest feeling among the masses, the most influential element in their character, is the religious element. It is as instinctive and elemental as the law of self-preservation. It informs the whole intellect and personality of the people. And he who would greatly influence the people by uttering their unformed thoughts must have this great and unanalyzable bond of sympathy with them."

When the men of Ulster armed themselves to oppose the passage of the Home Rule Act, one of the present writers assigned to a hundred men "Home Rule" as the topic for an address to be prepared by each. Among this group were some brilliant speakers, several of them experienced lawyers and political campaigners. Some of their addresses showed a remarkable knowledge and grasp of the subject; others were clothed in the most attractive phrases. But a clerk, without a great deal of education and experience, arose and told how he spent his boyhood days in Ulster, how his mother while holding him on her lap had pictured to him Ulster's deeds of valor. He spoke of a picture in his uncle's home that showed the men of Ulster conquering a tyrant and marching on to victory. His voice quivered, and with a hand pointing upward he declared that if the men of Ulster went to war they would not go alone—a great God would go with them.

The speech thrilled and electrified the audience. It thrills yet as we recall it. The high-sounding phrases, the historical knowledge, the philosophical treatment, of the other speakers largely failed to arouse any deep interest, while the genuine conviction and feeling of the modest clerk, speaking on a subject that lay deep in his heart, not only electrified his audience but won their personal sympathy for the cause he advocated.

As Webster said, it is of no use to try to pretend to sympathy or feelings. It cannot be done successfully. "Nature is forever putting a premium on reality." What is false is soon detected as such. The thoughts and feelings that create and mould the speech in the study must be born again when the speech is delivered from the platform. Do not let your words say one thing, and your voice and attitude another. There is no room here for half-hearted, nonchalant methods of delivery. Sincerity is the very soul of eloquence. Carlyle was right: "No Mirabeau, Napoleon, Burns, Cromwell, no man adequate to do anything, but is first of all in right earnest about it; what I call a sincere man. I should say sincerity, a great, deep, genuine sincerity, is the first characteristic of all men in any way heroic. Not the sincerity that calls itself sincere; ah no, that is a very poor matter indeed; a shallow braggart, conscious sincerity, oftenest self-conceit mainly. The great man's sincerity is of the kind he cannot speak of—is not conscious of."

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

It is one thing to convince the would-be speaker that he ought to put feeling into his speeches; often it is quite another thing for him to do it. The average speaker is afraid to let himself go, and continually suppresses his emotions. When you put enough feeling into your speeches they will sound overdone to you, unless you are an experienced speaker. They will sound too strong, if you are not used to enlarging for platform or stage, for the delineation of the emotions must be enlarged for public delivery.

1. Study the following speech, going back in your imagination to the time and circumstances that brought it forth. Make it not a memorized historical document, but feel the emotions that gave it birth. The speech is only an effect; live over in your own heart the causes that produced it and try to deliver it at white heat. It is not possible for you to put too much real feeling into it, though of course it would be quite easy to rant and fill it with false emotion. This speech, according to Thomas Jefferson, started the ball of the Revolution rolling. Men were then willing to go out and die for liberty.

PATRICK HENRY'S SPEECH

BEFORE THE VIRGINIA CONVENTION OF DELEGATES

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren, till she transforms us to beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern our temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British Ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House? Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be "betrayed with a kiss"! Ask yourselves, how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled, that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation, the last "arguments" to which kings resort.

I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and to rivet upon us those chains which the British Ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms

shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves longer. Sir, we have done everything that could be done, to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned, we have remonstrated, we have supplicated, we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the Ministry and Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded, and we have been spurned with contempt from the foot of the throne. In vain, after these things, may we indulge in the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free, if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending; if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained, we must fight; I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms, and to the God of Hosts, is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak—"unable to cope with so formidable an adversary"! But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of those means which the God of Nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of Liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just Power who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat, but in submission and slavery. Our chains are forged. Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston. The war is inevitable; and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come! It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry "Peace, peace!" but there is no peace! The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty Powers!—I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

2. Live over in your imagination all the solemnity and sorrow that Lincoln felt at the Gettysburg cemetery. The feeling in this speech is very deep, but it is quieter and more subdued than the preceding one. The purpose of Henry's address was to get action; Lincoln's speech was meant only to dedicate the last resting place of those who had acted. Read it over

and over (see [page 50](#)) until it burns in your soul. Then commit it and repeat it for emotional expression.

3. Beecher's speech on Lincoln, [page 76](#); Thurston's speech on "A Plea for Cuba," [page 50](#); and the following selection, are recommended for practise in developing feeling in delivery.

A living force that brings to itself all the resources of imagination, all the inspirations of feeling, all that is influential in body, in voice, in eye, in gesture, in posture, in the whole animated man, is in strict analogy with the divine thought and the divine arrangement; and there is no misconstruction more utterly untrue and fatal than this: that oratory is an artificial thing, which deals with baubles and trifles, for the sake of making bubbles of pleasure for transient effect on mercurial audiences. So far from that, it is the consecration of the whole man to the noblest purposes to which one can address himself—the education and inspiration of his fellow men by all that there is in learning, by all that there is in thought, by all that there is in feeling, by all that there is in all of them, sent home through the channels of taste and of beauty.—HENRY WARD BEECHER.

4. What in your opinion are the relative values of thought and feeling in a speech?

5. Could we dispense with either?

6. What kinds of selections or occasions require much feeling and enthusiasm? Which require little?

7. Invent a list of ten subjects for speeches, saying which would give most room for pure thought and which for feeling.

8. Prepare and deliver a ten-minute speech denouncing the (imaginary) unfeeling plea of an attorney; he may be either the counsel for the defense or the prosecuting attorney, and the accused may be assumed to be either guilty or innocent, at your option.

9. Is feeling more important than the technical principles expounded in chapters III to VII? Why?

10. Analyze the secret of some effective speech or speaker. To what is the success due?

11. Give an example from your own observation of the effect of feeling and enthusiasm on listeners.

12. Memorize Carlyle's and Emerson's remarks on enthusiasm.
13. Deliver Patrick Henry's address, [page 110](#), and Thurston's speech, [page 50](#), without show of feeling or enthusiasm. What is the result?
14. Repeat, with all the feeling these selections demand. What is the result?
15. What steps do you intend to take to develop the power of enthusiasm and feeling in speaking?
16. Write and deliver a five-minute speech ridiculing a speaker who uses bombast, pomposity and over-enthusiasm. Imitate him.